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A bit of creative writing. My one-shot attempt at Obama speech writing... how I would prefer the eventual outcome of the Augustine commission. Read with an Obama voice and meter. ;-)

My fellow Americans, it has been too long since this nation has reached for the stars, and found anything more than the near weightlessness of space a few hundred miles above our beloved planet Earth. It is true that the crowning technical achievements of Human Space Flight through NASA: the Space Shuttle and the International Space Station are an amazing sight to behold. If you get the timing right you can see the Space Station in the evening sky with your bare eyes. The international commitment to the construction and usage of the ISS has brought untold good will between ourselves and partner nations. We have touched the heavens so many times that some of us forget how dangerous it can be. The tragedies of Challenger and Columbia have shown us that space flight is anything but routine. Space demands respect.

With the aging Shuttle fleet we find ourselves at a crossroads. A path was set forth by the previous administration. That path identified a way forward which is very costly, at a time when our funds are precious. While our investments in NASA have traditionally given the American people an excellent return both financially and in terms of technological advances, we must allocate funds carefully, with an eye towards a higher goal, and a commitment of financial backing. We find that we cannot afford to simultaneously maintain the remaining Space Shuttles, the ISS and develop completely new rocket systems, launch pads, and other support infrastructure, much less reach any further into the heavens. Another way must be found. And it has been found. Alternative architectures which re-use many of the components in the Space Shuttle launch system have been proposed. These systems will require further study but appear to be more achievable, more affordable, and require less time to develop.

The Earth is our home. It is precious for many reasons, the most important being that it represents the sole example of an environment where life is known to exist. Many prominent scientists including the esteemed Stephen Hawking and the late Carl Sagan have stated their belief that we should seek to colonize the heavens, to preserve and protect that life. I share their common vision. Even now we live in a world where science fiction has become science fact. At this very moment men and women are living in space a few hundred miles above us. But we must go further. I dream of men living on other worlds. As luck would have it, Mars, our closest planetary neighbor has many suitable features for manned exploration and colonization. There are problems to be solved before this can occur, hard problems which will require feats of engineering and new marvels of technology to be born before such a task is achievable. Echoing a voice from the past I stand here before you today as JFK once did when he said:

"Our leadership in science and industry, our hopes for peace and security, our obligations to ourselves as well as others, all require us to make this effort, to solve these mysteries, to solve them for the good of all men, and to become the world's leading space-faring nation.

We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people."

Ladies and gentlemen. We chose to go to the moon. We chose to go to the moon and no further. For 40 years we have waited. It is time. **It is time to do the other things** that JFK spoke of. Not because they are easy, or even because they are hard. We must move beyond this planet, this cradle of life, and

claim our place in a much larger universe. Along the way we must learn to adapt to hazardous conditions, to manage precious resources and create new technologies to sustain life beyond the reaches of our home. Many of these advancements will help us here on Space Ship Earth: to advance the sciences, improve the quality of life for everyone, and to become better stewards of our natural resources.

I propose to increase NASA's budget and to simultaneously ask congress to commit to multiple years of funding, to reduce waste and inefficiencies in planning, research, and development. I propose setting forth the mandate for NASA to acquire the knowledge and hardware needed to put men and women in deep space, to visit astroids and comets, to orbit other planets, and eventually to put them on Mars and sustain them there.

Thank you,  
Michael Ayres